

MAHLERFEST

CONDUCTED BY ALEXANDER BRIGER



2025 COMMEMORATIVE
PROGRAMME

HISTORY IN THE MAKING

AUSTRALIAN
WORLD
ORCHESTRA

AUDACIOUS. EXHILARATING. LIMITLESS.

SOFITEL
MELBOURNE ON COLLINS

Awaken your senses where
luxury takes centre stage

A Hotel for the Arts and Official Partner of the Australian World Orchestra

ACCOMMODATION • RESTAURANT • BAR • EVENTS

Book your stay at sofitel-melbourne.com.au

AUSTRALIAN
WORLD
ORCHESTRA

AUDACIOUS. EXHILARATING. LIMITLESS.

MAHLERFEST

HISTORY IN THE MAKING

CONDUCTED BY
ALEXANDER BRIGER

GUSTAV MAHLER
SYMPHONY NO. 4
SYMPHONY NO. 5

SOPRANO
SARAH TRAUBEL

WEDNESDAY 3 SEPTEMBER, 7.30PM
HAMER HALL, ARTS CENTRE MELBOURNE

THURSDAY 4 SEPTEMBER, 8.00PM
CONCERT HALL, SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

In the spirit of reconciliation, the Australian World Orchestra acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

FROM THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA



It is a great pleasure to welcome audiences to the Australian World Orchestra's 'Mahlerfest' 2025, a bold and celebratory initiative honouring one of classical music's most visionary composers.

For more than a decade, the Australian World Orchestra has brought together our finest musicians from across the country and around the world, to deliver performances of extraordinary depth and artistry.

This act of homecoming is more than symbolic. It strengthens our cultural connections and reminds us of the exceptional talent nurtured right here at home. It also provides audiences with the opportunity to experience performances that are uniquely Australian in spirit, yet international in ambition.

This year, 'Mahlerfest' continues this proud tradition with two of Gustav Mahler's most celebrated symphonies: his lyrical Symphony No. 4 and emotionally charged Symphony No. 5.

Under the baton of AWO's Artistic Director and Chief Conductor, Alexander Briger AO, these concerts will guide audiences through Mahler's expansive musical landscapes. We are also delighted to welcome renowned German soprano Sarah Traubel as soloist in Symphony No. 4.

With the commencement of 'Mahlerfest' 2025, the AWO continues to make a substantial contribution to the cultural life of our nation. I extend my warmest congratulations to everyone involved, and wish audiences an inspiring musical experience.

THE HON ANTHONY ALBANESE MP
Prime Minister of Australia



CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

It is with immense pride and excitement that I welcome you to the 2025 season of the Australian World Orchestra. This year, we present an extraordinary musical event: two magnificent Mahler symphonies performed in one exceptional evening – a celebration of musical ambition and artistic excellence.

The 2025 season features Gustav Mahler's 4th and 5th symphonies in a single program – a bold, innovative pairing that showcases not only the exceptional technical virtuosity of our musicians but also their profound artistic depth. Under Alexander Briger's inspired direction, these contrasting symphonies will reveal the full spectrum of human experience, from the celestial innocence of the 4th to the transformative emotional journey of the 5th.

What makes this Mahler experience truly special is the homecoming of Australian musicians from premier international orchestras, reuniting with our outstanding resident artists. This gathering of talent represents the unique Australian musical voice on the world stage – technically brilliant, emotionally authentic, and distinctively our own. The AWO continues to serve as a powerful ambassador for Australian excellence in classical music, both at home and internationally.

Beyond the performances themselves, our Mahler program will include masterclasses and mentoring opportunities for emerging Australian musicians, continuing our commitment to nurturing the next generation of artistic talent. These educational initiatives reflect our belief that artistic excellence must be shared and sustained through meaningful engagement with young performers.

The Australian World Orchestra has always stood at the intersection of artistic innovation and cultural heritage. This celebration of Mahler's genius exemplifies that spirit, offering our audiences an unprecedented musical experience while strengthening the bonds within our musical community.

As we gather to witness this historic performance, I invite you to surrender completely to the experience. Allow Mahler's music to transport you, challenge you, and ultimately transform you. His symphonies speak profoundly to our shared humanity – our joys and sorrows, our struggles and triumphs – in ways that transcend time and place.

On behalf of the Australian World Orchestra, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our supporters, patrons, and the entire AWO family. Your continued dedication and generosity enable us to bring innovative programming of international significance to Australian audiences while showcasing our nation's extraordinary musical talent to the world.

Thank you for joining us this season. May Mahler's magnificent symphonies remind us all of music's unparalleled power to unite, inspire, and elevate the human spirit.

DOUGLAS FARRELL



ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND CHIEF CONDUCTOR'S MESSAGE

Good evening and welcome to the Australian World Orchestra's 15-year celebration since the orchestra was formed. It seems hard to believe the orchestra has been going for so long now! We are certainly very proud of what we have achieved in these short years – securing the world's greatest conductors, touring to India with Maestro Zubin Mehta AC, Singapore, receiving 5-star reviews at the BBC Proms and Edinburgh International Festival (also under Maestro Mehta), re-introducing world renowned countertenor Andreas Scholl, recording

Beethoven's 9th symphony, commissioning new Australian works from the likes of Elena Kats-Chernin AO and both Brett and Paul Dean, as well as the numerous awards we have now won.

The AWO has always prided itself as being an orchestra of "firsts" – the first Australian orchestra to secure the services of Sir Simon Rattle in Australia, the first orchestra in history to commission a concerto for eight double basses, the first Australian orchestra to tour to India. With that in mind and following on from the success of our groundbreaking Mahler 9th Symphony performances in both Melbourne and Sydney, we have decided to really push the limits for this year of celebration by attempting both Mahler's 4th and 5th symphonies in the one programme, which we believe has never been done in the Southern Hemisphere (and only twice in history by the "World Orchestra for Peace" under Valery Gergiev and the Concertgebouw long ago under Willem Mengelberg).

It is, we admit, a huge programme! However, the AWO believes in serving 12-course smorgasbords! For me, these symphonies have a personal significance, particularly the 4th. Way back in 1981, when I was 12 years old, my mother decided to take me to my first symphony concert. Until then I was far more interested in playing with model airplanes! Little did I know what affect that night would have on me. My uncle Sir Charles Mackerras, the revered Australian conductor along with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, performed Mahler's 4th Symphony. I'll never forget the impact as soon as I heard the first notes of the famous and incredibly moving, *Adagio* I was hooked. I simply could not believe music such as that existed. From that moment on all I wanted to do was to one day conduct that very piece of music, just like my uncle. To hear, mould and control it from upfront! After that I started practising the violin

very seriously, I started studying scores intensely and of course I went out and bought a recording of the Mahler's 4th, one of my first being under the superb Mahlerian conductor Klaus Tennstedt with his London Philharmonic Orchestra. As the world works in mysterious ways, many years later when I was living in London and had myself become a professional conductor, a great honour fell upon me – the London Philharmonic asked me to conduct Mahler's 4th Symphony at the Royal Festival Hall and my uncle Charles Mackerras came to see me conduct that performance! So in a way, we did a huge circle of life, a little like Charles's favourite opera, Janáček's *Cunning Little Vixen*.

As for the 5th, back in 2012, along with my good friend and oboist, Nick Deutsch (who is playing tonight), I went to visit Maestro Zubin Mehta at the Musikverein in Vienna, to talk about his upcoming tour to Australia with the AWO. There we briefly discussed the tour, worked out the programme within one minute and spent the rest of the meeting discussing India vs Australia test cricket! That night he invited us to see him conduct his Israel Philharmonic Orchestra and of course, Mahler's 5th Symphony, a work for which he is famed. Zubin has since become "family" to us and I remember listening to him conduct that very symphony that night and thinking: "Can this be possible? We have secured perhaps my favourite conductor to lead this incredible orchestra! What does that mean for the future of Australian music?"

So, for me to be conducting these two significant works in the one concert with this incredible group of Australian musicians and the wonderful German soprano, Sarah Traubel, who makes her Australian debut tonight, is something of a deep life achievement. I so hope you will revel in the music as much as I know I will!

ALEXANDER BRIGER AO



SOPRANO SARAH TRAUBEL

“Spectacular” (concerti) – “Magnetic stage presence” (Operaworld): Sarah Traubel has emerged as one of the most fascinating vocal artists from Europe. Nominated as Opus Klassik’s 2022 “Singer of the Year”, the German soprano with her bright voice of exceptional projection is today a sought-after concert and opera singer in a wide range of repertoire, from Mozart to Wagner, Strauss and Shostakovich. Ms Traubel has collaborated with leading conductors including Daniele Gatti, Giampaolo Bisanti, Ingo Metzmacher, Markus Stenz, and Adam Fischer.

Highlights of her 2025 season include Sarah’s concert performances at the Leipzig Gewandhaus and the Berlin Philharmonie, at Singapore’s Esplanade in a concert honouring the 60th independence anniversary of Singapore, and the Enescu Festival in Bucharest. 2024 saw her debut at the Mozaic Festival in California with Richard Wagner’s Wesendonck Songs, and invitations for a tour of Japan with a series of song recitals and concert performances. Recent concert highlights include Richard Strauss’s Four Last Songs, European tours with Mahler’s Symphony No. 4 and Rückert Lieder, and Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 14 (released on CD in 2025). She has repeatedly performed Richard Wagner’s Wesendonck-Lieder, including with the Prague Symphony Orchestra conducted by Claus Peter Flor, and with the Mexico City Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of Scott Yoo. Richard Wagner is also at the centre of several other concert programmes, including at Haus Wahnfried in Bayreuth. In 2024 she had her acclaimed debut at Berlin’s Philharmonie, in Gounod’s Messe solennelle de Sainte Cécile. With her accompanist Helmut Deutsch, she appeared at the Lavaux Classic Festival in Cully and will return to Konzerthaus Blaibach and other European recital venues, with Mahler, Strauss and Wagner. At Oper Leipzig, where Ms Traubel was a member of the ensemble until 2025, following positions at Zurich Opera and Freiburg Opera, she recently appeared as Freia in Wagner’s *Das Rheingold* and as Helmwig in *Die Walküre*. Sarah also sang Agathe in Weber’s *Der Freischütz* and appeared in the title role of Lortzing’s *Undine*. Having appeared as Sophie in Richard Strauss’ *Der Rosenkavalier* with the NOSPR Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Lawrence Foster, alongside Sophie Koch as Octavian, she was invited to return to this work as Marschallin, again conducted by Maestro Foster. At Oper Leipzig, she also returned to her roles of Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* and Violetta in *La Traviata*. Her interpretation of the role of Inanna in Jörg Widmann’s opera *Babylon* at the State Theatre Wiesbaden earned her rave reviews (“Dominating ... stunning”: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*; “Amazing ... highly convincing presence”: *Hessischer Rundfunk*).

A passionate actress on the opera stage, Sarah Traubel has collaborated with eminent stage directors including Harry Kupfer, Katharina Thoma, Jan Esslinger, Joan Anton Rechi, Paco Azorín, Nina Russi, and Jens-Daniel Herzog. Her album “De Profundis” featuring arias by Bach and works for soprano by Schönberg and Berg, was released on Aparté in 2023, followed in 2025 by the Symphony No. 14 by Dmitri Shostakovich (also on Aparté). Her 2022 CD “In meinem Lied”, together with pianist Helmut Deutsch (on Aparté), featuring songs by Liszt, Mahler, Strauss and Korngold, brought her nominations for the Opus Klassik Award as “Female Singer of the Year”. Her SONY Classical debut CD “Arias for Josepha” of Mozart and other virtuoso coloratura arias was released in 2020 and received worldwide critical acclaim, including a four-star review by *Gramophone* (“A colourful debut ... Sublime.”).

Sarah Traubel, grandniece of legendary Metropolitan Opera soprano Helen Traubel and of conductor Günter Wand, began her singing career in her hometown of Mannheim, Germany, at age seventeen. Following her studies at Universität der Künste in Berlin, she graduated from the Salzburg Mozarteum with distinction. Sarah also obtained a master’s degree from the Manhattan School of Music in New York.

Arab
Bank
Australia
Limited

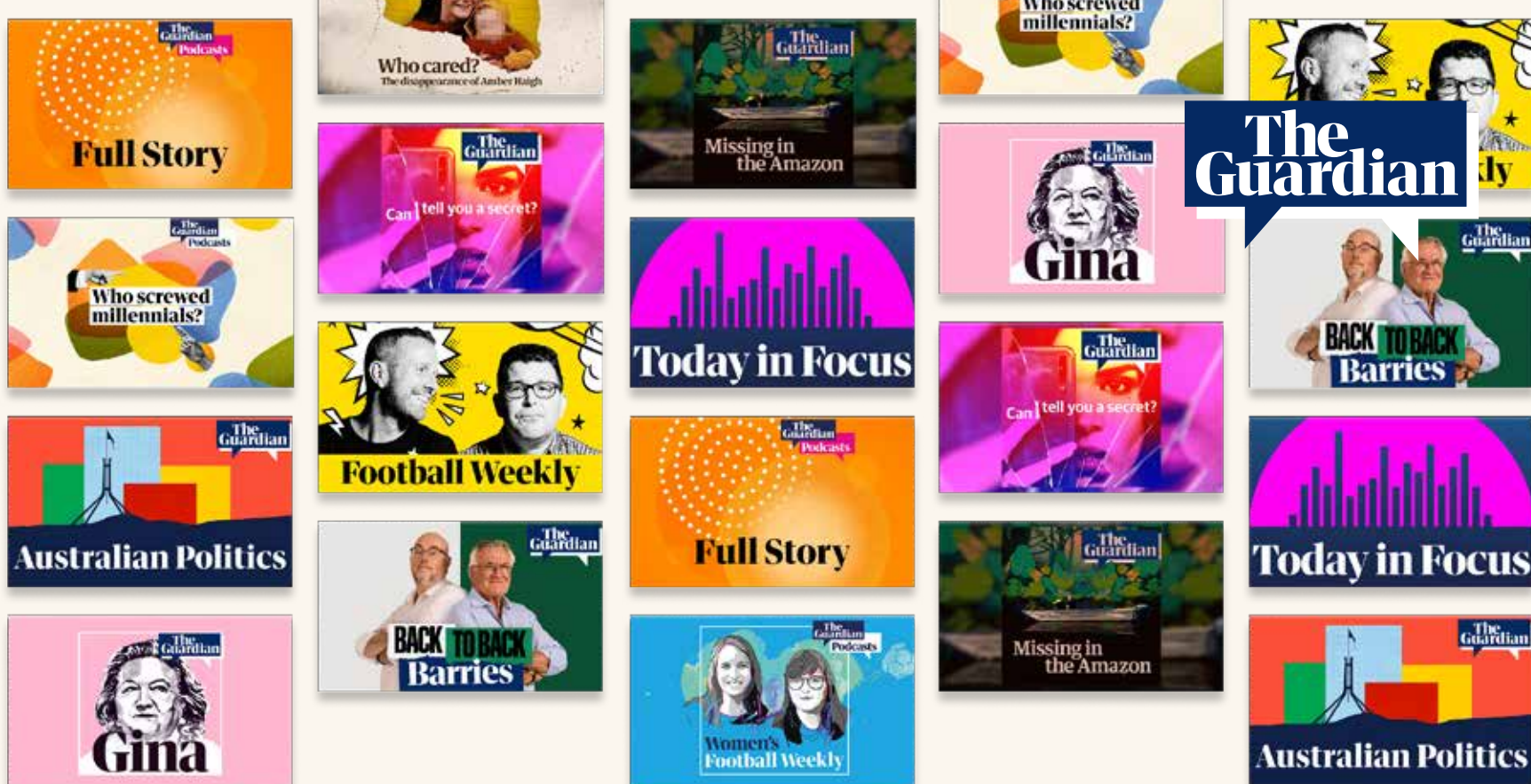
SUPPORTING REMARKABAL MUSICIANS SHAPING OUR FUTURE

 arabbank.com.au  [@abalbanking](https://www.instagram.com/abalbanking)  Freecall 1800 272 222

YOUTH ACADEMY PARTNER SINCE 2019

Arab Bank Australia Limited ABN 37 002 950 745 AFSL 234563.

We Are
abal banking



Listen to the Guardian

Explore our latest podcasts on the Guardian app

Download now



Download now



PATRONS



HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE MS SAM MOSTYN AC

I am proud to join Australians and all lovers of great music performed with consummate skill, to celebrate the Australian World Orchestra 2025 season. Bringing together exceptional musicians from across the country and around the world, the AWO represents the diversity, energy and optimism of modern Australia. As an ensemble, AWO exemplifies the importance of a creative community. As educators, the professionals of the AWO are generous mentors to aspiring young musicians. Inspiring, impressive and delightful, the AWO is a cherished part of Australia's arts landscape and represents the vital place of the arts in our national life. As a patron of the AWO, I am proud to recognise the orchestra's achievements since its founding in 2010, and look forward to celebrating its distinctive performance long into the future!



GENERAL THE HONOURABLE SIR PETER COSGROVE AK AC(Mil) CVO MC (RETD) AND LADY LYNNE COSGROVE

Lynne and I have greatly enjoyed our involvement with the Australian World Orchestra and the experience of seeing and hearing some of Australia's finest classical musicians. We have been moved by their efforts to capture the sense of 'returning home' for these talented roving musical ambassadors.



DAVID GONSKI AC

The Australian World Orchestra is a dream of many Australian musicians. I am proud to support these wonderfully talented players, bringing many of them home and combining them with our world-class local musicians. Their performances are not to be missed events.



MAUREEN RIZK OAM

I have been fortunate enough to be a patron of the AWO for the past four years. The work they do is remarkable. It is an incredible thing to bring together Australia's finest musicians to perform under the great conductors of the world but it is a greater vision to use their unique collectiveness to inspire and empower young musicians through the AWO's extensive education programme. I am very proud of the partnership ABAL banking (Arab Bank Australia) has with the AWO for the past six years via the AWO Youth Academy Partnership. Engaging with students at crucial stages in their development is one of the most valuable investments into the arts we can make.

INAUGURAL PATRON



SIR CHARLES MACKERRAS

AC CH CBE (1925-2010)

"I am very proud to be a patron of the remarkable Australian World Orchestra. I have spent my whole life making music with my fellow countrymen and women and I regard them to be amongst the greatest orchestral players alive, holding major positions in the world's premiere orchestras. We are a nation of very closely knit and talented musicians. Bringing them all together from around the globe produces an orchestra of the highest quality with a truly unique and Australian sound. What an exciting prospect!"

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of our inaugural Patron, Sir Charles Mackerras AC, who died in 2010. In 1947, as a young oboist and pianist, Charles moved to London to hone his conducting skills, where a chance conversation in a café led him to Czechoslovakia. He studied with Vaclav Talich in 1947-1948 and developed a profound love and knowledge of Czech music, and in particular the music and operas of Leoš Janáček, which he introduced to the West. He was also renowned as a Mozart authority and conducted Mozart's *Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute*) in the presence of Queen Elizabeth II for the official opening celebrations of the Sydney Opera House. The previous month, on 29 September 1973, he had conducted the Sydney Symphony Orchestra with soprano Birgit Nilsson in the Gala Opening Concert. He subsequently became the first Australian Chief Conductor of the SSO. As a man of discovery and many firsts the concept of the AWO appealed greatly to him, and although unfortunately he died a year before the inaugural concert (where he was slated to conduct Beethoven's 9th Symphony), it was an honour that his daughter Catherine travelled from the UK and sang with the Sydney Philharmonia Choirs as a tribute to her father and his heritage. Charles was knighted in the 1979 New Year's Honours by Queen Elizabeth II, and in 1997, he was made a Companion of the Order of Australia (AC) for services to music and Australian music.



EZEKIEL SOLOMON AM

I am thrilled to be involved in this amazing project. The Australian World Orchestra is a wonderful venture, not only connecting both national and international musicians, but also supporting the development of many up and coming young Australian musicians who will benefit enormously from the education programme.

INTERNATIONAL PATRONS



HARISH RAO

I have enjoyed actively supporting the Australian World Orchestra since 2012, firstly as a Board Member and then as a Chair until 2022. I was instrumental in taking the Australian World Orchestra to India, twice. It continues to be the only Australian Orchestra to have toured there, firstly under the baton of Maestro Zubin Mehta AC and then with Australian World Orchestra Artistic Director, Alexander Briger AO. I continue to be passionate about the Australian World Orchestra.



IAN BREEDON

I have very much enjoyed my long relationship with the Australian World Orchestra, watching it grow to become a unique, bold, modern icon in the orchestral world both in Australia and around the globe. I look forward to continuing to work with the AWO, now in their second decade, showcasing Australia's finest classical musicians to the world performing under the batons of the world's greatest conductors. In addition, their innovative music development program continues to inspire emerging Australian talent.



MICHAEL NAPHTALI

I have had a close association with the Australian World Orchestra since its inception when Alexander first approached me to help with the orchestra's establishment. Little could we have known the scale upon which we were then to embark. There was a need then for the Australian World Orchestra; a need which has only grown more apparent with the passage of time. Its achievements are numerous, the acclaim it has garnered wholly deserved and its contribution to Australia's cultural life unique and undeniable. I look forward to continuing to aid the achievements of this wonderful Australian organisation both at home and abroad.



SUSAN COLES

As a former Australian Ambassador with a 30 year career in diplomacy, I know firsthand the power of cultural or 'soft' diplomacy. My association with AWO dates back to their tour of India in 2018. I witnessed AWO showcasing Australian talent internationally and themselves playing a role as inter-cultural and educational Ambassadors. Each year, AWO brings world class musicianship from the orchestras of the world back home, in joyous reunion concerts with their Australian-based peers.

MELBOURNE CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC

EMPOWERING STUDENTS TO PURSUE THEIR CREATIVE PURPOSE

The Melbourne Conservatorium of Music at the University of Melbourne is Australia's largest and oldest institution for professional music training, since 1895.

finearts-music.unimelb.edu.au

The University of Melbourne (Australian University) PRV12150 / CRICOS 00116K

Faculty of
Fine Arts & Music



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE



CONDUCTOR ALEXANDER BRIGER AO

Described by both Zubin Mehta and Riccardo Muti as a “wonderful conductor and musician”, Australian conductor, Alexander Briger is one of Australia's preeminent musicians. Alexander worked closely with both Sir Charles Mackerras, where he developed a strong knowledge of the music of Leoš Janáček, and Pierre Boulez and the Ensemble InterContemporain. He has premiered works by composers such as Arvo Pärt, Bruno Mantovani, Mark-Anthony Turnage, Elena Kats-Chernin and Simon Holt and is considered a specialist in the works of Janáček and Britten, as well as Mozart and Adams.

Alexander was honoured in the 2016 Australia Day Honours List as an “Officer of the Order of Australia” (AO) for distinguished services to the arts as a leading conductor.”

His engagements in recent years have included performances of Stravinsky's *Petrushka* and Shostakovich's 5th Symphony with the London Symphony Orchestra at the Barbican, London, Brahms's 1st and Schubert's 9th Symphonies with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra in Tel Aviv and Haifa, critically acclaimed performances of Mahler's 9th Symphony in Sydney and Melbourne with the Australian World Orchestra, Mozart's *Zauberflöte* at the Toulon Opera, Britten's *Turn of the Screw* at the Paris Philharmonie, concerts with the Orchestra of the Teatro San Carlo, Naples and John Adams' *I Was Looking at the Ceiling and Then I Saw the Sky* with the Teatro dell'Opera di Roma and at the Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris, following a hugely successful debut at the same theatre conducting the Paris premiere of Adams's *Nixon in China*.

He has also worked with such orchestras as the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Academy of St Martin in the Fields, Orchestre de Paris, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Ensemble InterContemporain, Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, Paris Chamber Orchestra, Konzerthaus Orchester, Berlin, Frankfurt Radio Orchestra, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Gothenburg Symphony, Swedish Radio Orchestra, Danish Symphony Orchestra, Salzburg Mozarteum, Belgium National Orchestra, Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra, Japanese Virtuoso Symphony, all the major Australian symphony orchestras and with the London Sinfonietta (collaborating with Peter Sellars and pianist Hélène Grimaud for the premiere of Arvo Pärt's *Lamentate*) among many others.

He has performed regularly with the Philharmonia Orchestra in London (collaborating with such soloists as the late Alfred Brendel, Maria Joao Pires and Murray Perahia) and the London Philharmonic Orchestra, including their tour to China in 2004, and made his BBC Proms and Berlin Festival debuts with the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group (following a recommendation from Sir Simon Rattle) and Edinburgh Festival debut with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. He has also worked with such soloists as Paul Lewis, Kirill Gerstein, Akiko Suwanai, Isabella Faust, Julia Fischer, Henrich Schiff and Gautier Capuçon.

Considered an opera specialist, Alexander has conducted for the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Glyndebourne Festival, English National Opera, Welsh National Opera, Komischeoper Berlin, Aix-en-Provence Festival, Théâtre du Châtelet Paris, Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, Teatro San Carlo, Naples, Canadian Opera Company, Helikon Opera, Moscow, Royal Danish Opera, Royal Swedish Opera and Opera Australia, amongst others.

Alexander has worked with such singers as Dame Felicity Lott, June Anderson, Elizabeth Connell, Cheryl Barker, Sumi Jo, Bo Skovhus, Gerald Finley, Christine Rice, Nikolai Schukoff, Christopher Maltman and Franco Pomponi and directors such as Jonathan Miller, Peter Sellars, Baz Luhrmann, Neil Armfield, Christopher Alden, Adrian Noble, Dmitry Bertman and Chen Shi-Zheng.

In 2010, he founded the Australian World Orchestra, of which he is the Artistic Director and Chief Conductor, and in 2011 conducted their award-winning inaugural season at the Sydney Opera House with Beethoven's 9th Symphony, which was subsequently released on Deutsche Grammophon, as well as leading the orchestra on their Asia tours to Singapore in 2016 and India in 2018.

His current season has included his debuts with the Milan Symphony Orchestra, performances with the Kyiv Symphony Orchestra in Munich to mark the 2-year anniversary of the start of war, Verdi gala concerts with Opera Australia, Nicole Car and Etienne Dupuis, Janáček's *Katya Kabanova* with the Victorian Opera and Britten's *Turn of the Screw* at the Opéra de Lausanne.



Alexander Briger conducts the Australian World Orchestra in 2021.

MARATHON MAN

Alexander Briger, the Chief Conductor and founding Artistic Director of the Australian World Orchestra, has programmed Mahler's Fourth and Fifth Symphonies in one concert. Madness or genius? **Clive Paget** discusses the two symphonies and the task at hand with Briger and two AWO musicians.

Gustav Mahler's famous credo that a symphony must embrace everything stands as one of music history's more aspirational statements. Its ambition will be matched this September when the Australian World Orchestra performs two of the composer's masterworks on the one program under the baton of Chief Conductor and Artistic Director Alexander Briger. "We aim to be bold with AWO, trying to do things that push the limits," he replies when I politely enquire if he's of sound mind and body. "Mahler Nine [in 2023] was so successful, I thought, 'Well, what can we do that's really going to stretch us?' I've always had a dream to do the Fourth Symphony, but it's small. Five is wonderful, but it needs something to go with it. So, we thought we would attempt to do both. In this day and age, we have to grab people's attention." Many commentators see the Fourth and Fifth Symphonies as straddling a compositional fault line between the so-called *Wunderhorn* symphonies –

programmatic works incorporating melodies Mahler conceived when setting poems from the German folk anthology *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* – and the following three symphonies where he adopts a more abstract, increasingly contrapuntal approach. It's not quite as simple as that – the finale of the Fifth Symphony quotes *Lob des hohen Verstandes* (In Praise of High Intellect), a song about a vocal contest between a nightingale and a cuckoo as judged by a donkey – but these middle-period works definitely exhibit a greater thematic rigour.

"I wouldn't say the Fourth is simplistic by any means – it's smaller, less dramatic, a bit like Prokofiev's *Classical* Symphony in that respect," Briger agrees, chatting over Zoom from his home in France. "Five shoots off towards numbers Six, Seven, Eight and Nine, but to be honest, I think Four and Five are perfectly coupled. You couldn't do two others together. I don't think it would work."

It's not just stylistic matters that change between the Fourth and Fifth Symphonies. When it comes to the Fourth, we know a great deal about Mahler's musical intentions thanks to his friend and confidant, Austrian violinist Natalie Bauer-Lechner, who shared many of his creative vacations, along with Mahler's sister Justine. By the time he completed the Fifth, Mahler was married to composer and editor Alma Schindler, a sometimes-unreliable witness who has a habit of telling us more about herself than her husband's music, except, of course, when she's taking credit for his inspiration.

When Mahler began the Fourth Symphony in 1899, the strain of running the Vienna Hofoper had prevented him writing a major work for three years. Nevertheless, he and his gallant crew set off in June for a tiny village south of Linz where they believed they had rented a house. On arrival – baggage, books, music and piano in tow – they found the family in residence downstairs with only a first-floor apartment available. It took an arduous 10-day trek before they found alternative digs in the spa town of Altaussee.

Conditions were far from perfect. Through his study window, Mahler could hear the municipal orchestra hammering out wedding songs, serenades and funeral marches. (Some might say this is the stuff of which Mahler symphonies are made.) Not only that, he also received a daily barrage of cards from female admirers requesting autographs or photos.

"It is torture for me to do something when I'm not completely in the mood," he complained to Natalie. Before long, the end of the vacation was hanging over his unproductive head like a Sword of Damocles.

Determined to undertake a final push, and despite unseasonably cold, wet weather, he squirrelled himself away in a poorly furnished room under the eaves and set to work, sketching out some *Wunderhorn* settings and correcting proofs for the Third Symphony. At last, as the composer began spending more and more time in his musical garret, his fellow holidaymakers began to sense that a substantial work was in progress.

With only 10 days left, Mahler found himself falling back on walks to jot down a theme or idea. But the nearer the end of the holiday loomed, the more his concerns manifested themselves in attacks of dizziness. Finally, after actually fainting on one walk, he called a halt to compositional work altogether.

"I have never had trouble finishing an entirely sketched composition," he remarked. "This time, however, ideas poured out so abundantly that I scarcely knew how to catch them all and was almost at a loss to fit everything in. And what a frightful wrong note the holidays ended on, leaving me haunted by the fear that this terrible feeling of dizziness will take hold of me whenever I want to work again."

Remarkably, after all the doom and gloom, what emerged was the composer's sunniest symphony, a work full of innocence and carefree zest for life. Uniquely for Mahler, the work seldom reaches *forte*, and the orchestra has no trombones.

A month later, Natalie and Justine discovered Maiernigg on the shore of the Wörthersee where Mahler purchased land on which to build a permanent summer villa. A few hundred yards off, deep in the woods, he found the perfect spot for a secluded composing hut – one of his famous *Häuschen*. The following summer, despite barking dogs, barrel organs and birds nesting in the roof, which blank cartridges and scarecrows failed to deter, he was able to complete the work.

THE FORCE OF THE FOURTH

The Fourth Symphony has always held a special place in Briger's heart. When he was 12, his mother suggested that maybe it was time he attended a Sydney Symphony Orchestra concert conducted by his uncle, Sir Charles Mackerras.

"I can't even remember what was in the first half, but then they did Mahler Four and as soon as the third movement started, I couldn't move," he recalls. (For the curious, the audio from that 1981 performance is available on YouTube.) "I thought, 'I have to conduct that. I have to do what my uncle's doing. I have to stand on that podium and wave my arms and control that particular piece of music.'"

The following day, he rushed out and bought Sir Georg Solti's recording, rapidly followed by Klaus Tennstedt's with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. "I became absolutely obsessed," he admits. "And then, when I moved to London, I formed a relationship with the London Philharmonic and, lo and behold, they asked me to conduct it. I was blown away."

Attempting to describe the work, Mahler told Natalie to "imagine the uniform blue of the sky". Occasionally, he said, it darkens, becoming phantasmagorical and terrifying (especially in the *Scherzo*), but the *Adagio* "puts everything right again" with something he referred to as "the smile of St Ursula". (It reminded him, he suggested, of his mother's infinitely sad face "laughing through her tears" and "pardoning all things".) As for movement titles, he told Natalie that he had "devised some marvellous ones," but chose not to divulge them to "stupid critics and audiences who would misunderstand and distort them in the worst possible way".

The symphony opens with a flourish of sleigh bells and a breezy *Allegro* suggestive of a walk in the countryside. Mahler likened the first theme to "dewdrops on a flower before dawn, which burst into a thousand lights and colours with the first ray of the sun". On another occasion, he described the opening differently – "The movement begins as if it couldn't count to three, but then launches out into the full multiplication table, until at last it is reckoning dizzily in millions upon millions."

"There's no sadness there," says Briger, "just beautiful, simple melodies, almost like children laughing and playing. For me, that's what the percussion, particularly the sleigh bells, represents."

As themes tumble over each other, the music builds to a trumpet fanfare, something Mahler called *Der kleine Appell* (The little call to order). "Just when the confusion is at its height, and the erstwhile disciplined troops are stampeding, a command from the General causes them to rally round the standard." AWO audiences will have the satisfaction of hearing that melody again since it crops up as the opening theme of the Fifth Symphony.

The second movement is in the style of an Austrian *ländler*. "The *Scherzo* is so mystical, confused and

uncanny that it will make your hair stand on end," Mahler told Natalie, likening the texture to spiders' webs or a delicate shawl knitted with thread as fine as hair. In a twist, he asks the solo violin to retune a tone higher – a technique known as *scordatura*.

Mahler likened the first theme to "dewdrops on a flower before dawn, which burst into a thousand lights and colours with the first ray of the sun."

"There's nothing worse than having a concertmaster play it like it's the Brahms Violin Concerto," says Briger. "It's got to be disgusting and ugly, tearing the violin apart. I remember James Clark, who was the leader of the Philharmonia [in London], telling me it has to be like that. 'I'm the Devil,' he said, 'and I'm about to bring down the whole world.'"

"The violin solo is meant to represent Freund Hein, an allegorical figure of Death in German folklore," says AWO Concertmaster Rebecca Chan. "According to Alma, Mahler was composing 'under the spell' of a self-portrait by Arnold Böcklin in which 'Death fiddles into the painter's ear while the latter sits entranced.'"

"It's one of the most challenging things I have ever encountered, due to the *scordatura* tuning," she explains. "I happen to have what is termed perfect pitch, which means I hear notes in the usual A440 framework. When one tunes to a different pitch, it's a crippling curse! The feedback to my brain when first trying to play this solo makes me feel like I am totally losing my mind and all capability as a violinist! The other challenge is you need two violins on hand, as there are also solos using regular tuning. If you were accidentally to pick up the wrong violin it would be disastrous."

The *Adagio*, essentially a double theme treated to continuous variations, is by far the longest movement. Mahler referred to the final decrescendo as music of the spheres.

"The *Adagio* of the Fourth wipes out the *Adagietto* of the Fifth," declares Briger. "I mean, you can't even compare the two. The Fifth is gorgeous, the melody is wonderful, yes, but it's nothing like the Fourth."

For the finale, Mahler turned to one of his pre-existing *Wunderhorn* songs. It's a child's vision of heaven, and although each verse ends with a lullaby and the intervening mood is fairly jolly, there's plenty of blood and gore, including Herod slaughtering lambs and oxen. All of it appears in Mahler's Technicolor but translucent orchestrations.

"I absolutely adore it when the soprano sings '*Kein Musik ist ja nicht auf Erden*' – there's no music like this on earth. It's one of the most intimate and gorgeous moments in all classical music," says Briger. "The Fourth, for me, is very, very personal."

Despite its popularity today, the 1901 Munich premiere was a fiasco. With Mahler refusing to hint at any program, the critics could make neither head nor tail of it. It was a similar story at the Vienna premiere in 1902. Mahler and the orchestra were on bad terms, and even the presence of his fiancée Alma failed to put the composer in a good humour. The reviewers condemned the music for its "naïveté", its "affectations" and for being "incomprehensible". A "werewolf in sheep's clothing", wrote one critic, claiming the work was possessed of an "odour of brimstone".

THE RELENTLESS, THRILLING FIFTH

The Fifth Symphony was written in 1901 and 1902, mostly during the summer months at Mahler's new villa in Maiernigg. In February 1901, Mahler had suffered a sudden rectal haemorrhage – his doctor told him that he had come within an hour of bleeding to death – so that year's holiday was partially one of recuperation. He was also going through a 'Bach phase', which might account for more complex counterpoint in this and the following two symphonies.

Although he was relaxed and happy in his new home, the symphony begins in considerable anguish with an expansive funeral march whose gloomy pall spreads over much of the first two movements. Contrast that with the sunny Fourth Symphony, begun on a holiday that was full of frustrations. It may be, however, that the composer was brooding on his brush with death. Indeed, there is evidence of a profound change in Mahler's personality from 1901 onwards.

It's unclear exactly what music was composed in 1901, but he certainly wrote the *Scherzo*, which he discussed at the time with Natalie. "You won't believe the trouble it's giving me, the obstacles and thorns it's strewing in my way, largely because of the simplicity of the themes, which are all based on tonic or dominant chords," he said. "Each note is so full of vitality and everything in it revolves as though in a whirlwind or the tail of a comet. It's the expression of unparalleled power, that of a man in the full light of day who has reached the climax of his life."

By the time he returned to Maiernigg in the summer of 1902, Mahler had married Alma. With Natalie and other old friends cast into the outer darkness, we know relatively little about the Fifth Symphony's completion. It was a miserable time for Alma, however, who was expecting their first child. Left mostly to her own devices – except for relentless afternoon hikes – she was expected to take on Justine's former tasks of driving off birds and sightseers while bribing neighbours with opera tickets to keep their dogs away from the *Häuschen*. Worse, the Wagnerian soprano Anna von Mildenburg insisted on turning up unannounced, with a scruffy rescue dog that Mahler hated, and regaling Alma with salacious tales of her previous relationship with her husband.

Alma was, however, the first to hear the Fifth Symphony played straight through on the piano. Up until then she'd not always appreciated Mahler's music, but she seemed to enjoy this one, though she found the finale's chorale "ecclesiastical and boring".

"Technically, the Fifth is the hardest of the symphonies for the orchestra to play," says Briger. "It's not as long as the Ninth or the Third or the Second, but particularly for the strings, it's relentless; he just doesn't let up. It opens with the most tragic of his funeral marches, also the most extensive. The second movement is so fragmented and complicated, and the third is even harder. And then he makes the strings play that *Adagietto* where they have to give everything. Even then it doesn't finish – the finale goes on with fugues and relentless scales. At the end of it all, orchestras are exhausted. I spoke to a lot of the players, and said, 'Is this possible after the Fourth?' And they all said, 'Absolutely, let's do it.'"

AWO Principal Horn Andrew Bain is particularly aware of the task at hand. "The Fifth is an incredibly demanding work for the entire horn section. Mahler understood the expressive and physical potential of the horn like few composers, and here he pushes those limits to their edge," he says.

Throughout the symphony, Mahler features the horns in exposed, lyrical and technically challenging

passages that test both the individual skill and cohesion of the ensemble. "While it presents immense challenges, it's also one of the most thrilling and rewarding pieces to perform as a horn player," says Bain. "It's a true showcase of the instrument's power, colour and expressive range."

The third movement is especially demanding. Ahead of the premiere, Mahler wrote: "The *Scherzo* is a devil of a movement! What a long and painful history awaits it! For the next 50 years conductors will play it too quickly and make a nonsense of it."

"It has to do with your players," says Briger. "You need to sit down with them and ask, 'How do you feel about this?' It's definitely a collaborative approach."

"The *obbligato* horn part in the *Scherzo* is one of the most iconic and difficult solos in the repertoire," concurs Bain. "The soloist must play with authority and finesse while seamlessly weaving in and out of the texture with the rest of the orchestra. It demands extraordinary control over rhythm, dynamics, phrasing and – perhaps most of all – nerve."

Alma was surely right when she maintained that the famous *Adagietto* was Mahler's love letter to her. Over the years, interpretations have differed wildly, with performances ranging from seven minutes (Mengelberg and apparently Mahler) to a remarkable 14 minutes (Haitink). "I think it has to move," says Briger. "For me, it's a *chanson*. If you were to give it to a soprano and did it as slowly as that, you'd kill her."

Mahler himself expected his first listeners to struggle with the Fifth's inherent turbulence. "And the audience – heavens!" he declared. "What a face it is bound to pull at this chaos, which constantly gives birth to a new world only to destroy it moments later, at these sounds of a primeval world, this howling, booming, roaring sea, this host of dancing stars, these breathtaking, glittering waves? What can a herd of sheep do but bleat when confronted by a 'singing contest of the fraternal spheres'? ... Oh, if only I could give my symphonies their first performances 50 years after my death!"

"We aim to be bold with AWO, trying to do things that push the limits ... I've always had a dream to do the Fourth Symphony, but it's small. Five is wonderful, but it needs something to go with it. So, we thought we would attempt to do both."

He was right. The 1904 Cologne premiere left many of the German critics disconcerted. Again, they complained of sensing a story behind the music, but the composer had provided no program or analysis. Criticisms included the work's unpredictability and its lack of musical logic. In other words, *plus ça change*. Although audiences adored the *Adagietto*, more serious admirers – Richard Strauss among them – felt that in this movement, Mahler had made an artistic concession to popular taste.

Australians will get a chance to compare these two contrasting masterpieces when Briger steps out to conduct the AWO. It's a moment he's anticipating keenly. "I'm going to be on the stage where my uncle was, and that changed my life, so I suppose I'll be very emotional," he says. "I won't be thinking about the magnitude of the task, but afterwards I'm sure I'll be exhausted – and ready for a glass of wine."

This article first appeared in **Limelight Magazine**. www.limelightmagazine.com.au

MUSICIANS OF THE AUSTRALIAN WORLD ORCHESTRA

VIOLIN



REBECCA CHAN
CONCERTMASTER
SYMPHONY No.4
Associate Leader Violin – Philharmonia Orchestra, London; Former – Melbourne Chamber Orchestra; Former – ACO



DANIEL DODDS
CONCERTMASTER
SYMPHONY No.5
Artistic Director and Leader – Festival Strings Lucerne



JONATHAN ALLEN
1st Violin – Philharmonia Zurich, Switzerland; Ensemble Il Tritico; Jewel Ensemble; Orchestra La Scintilla



MARGARET BLADES
Co-Artistic Director – Southern Cross Soloists; Creative Director of Music – Bond University; Former Associate Concertmaster – WASO; Concertmaster – ASO



MICHAEL BROOKS REID
Co-Principal 2nd Violin – Camerata Bern; Guest performer – Mahler Chamber Orchestra; Guest Concertmaster – Orquestra Sinfonica del Principado de Asturias



LUCY CARRIG
Principal 2nd Violin – Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra (TSO)



PETER CHRISTOPHER CLARK
New Zealand String Quartet; Former Principal Violin – Omega Ensemble; Former – ACO



HEATHER COTTRELL
Acting Deputy Concertmaster – Staatskapelle Berlin; Former Principal 2nd Violin – Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra



MADELEINE EASTON
Artistic Director – Bach Akademie Australia; Independent Music Professional (IMP) – London/Europe; Former Concertmaster – The Hanover Band



PAUL EZERGAILIS
Violin Co-Leader – Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra; Luminosa, Galway



ANNE HARVEY-NAGL
Concertmaster – Volksoper Vienna; Koehne Quartet, Vienna



SOLA HUGHES
2025 AWO ACADEMY PLAYER
Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM)



MARLENE ITO
1st Principal 2nd Violin – Berliner Philharmoniker



SIMON JAMES
Violin Professor – San Francisco Conservatory of Music; Teacher – Coleman Violin Studio; Former Second Assistant Concertmaster – Seattle Symphony Orchestra; Former Concertmaster – Seattle Chamber Orchestra



NAOKO KEATLEY
Second Violin – London Symphony Orchestra (LSO)



KATHERINE LUKEY
Deputy Concertmaster – Opera Australia Orchestra (OAO); Former Assistant Concertmaster – Sydney Symphony Orchestra (SSO); Principal 1st Violin – Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (MSO)



BELINDA MCFARLANE
Director and 2nd Violin – LSO; Fiorini piano trio



ANNA MCMICHAEL
Classical Convenor and Head of Strings – Monash University; Former Co-Artistic Director – Tyalgum Music Festival



MONICA NASELOV
Principal 2nd Violin – Orchestra Victoria; Australian Ballet; Former – TSO; 2nd Violin – Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra



KANA OHASHI
Associate Concertmaster – Gewandhaus Orchestra, Leipzig; Former Director – Manchester Cosmos Strings



SUSIE PARK
First Associate Concertmaster – Minnesota Orchestra; East Coast Chamber Orchestra; First Violinist – Enso String Quartet; Former Soloist – Vienna Symphony Orchestra;



SOPHIE ROWELL
Artistic Director – Melbourne Chamber Orchestra; Associate Professor in Violin – University of Melbourne (UoM); Former Concertmaster – MSO



PATRICK SAVAGE
IMP – Concertmaster and film composer; Former Principal First Violin – Royal Philharmonic Orchestra; Former Leader – Tippett Quartet



WILMA SMITH
Wilma and Friends; Second Violin – Flinders Quartet; Artistic Director of Competitions – Musica Viva Australia; Co-Artistic Director – Martinborough Music Festival; Former Concertmaster – MSO and New Zealand Symphony Orchestra (NZSO)



CLAIRE STERLING
Co-Principal 2nd Violin – English National Opera; Former Principal 2nd Violin – Scottish Chamber Orchestra



SCOTT STILES
1st Violin – Mozarteum Orchester, Salzburg; Former – OAO



KATE SUTHERS
Concertmaster – ASO; Former – English National Opera; Scottish Ensemble



MIKI TSUNODA
Principal 2nd Violin – Antwerp Symphony Orchestra



MELINDA WATZEL
Principal 2nd Violin – Komische Oper Berlin; Deutsche Kammerorchester



NOAM YAFFE
Israel Philharmonic Orchestra

VIOLA



ROBERT ASHWORTH
Principal Viola – Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra; Jade String Quartet, New Zealand



ROGER BENEDICT
Associate Professor and Chief Conductor – Sydney Conservatorium of Music; Former Principal Viola – SSO; Principal Viola – Philharmonia Orchestra, London



CAMERON CAMPBELL
Philharmonia Orchestra; LSO; London Philharmonic Orchestra; BBC Symphony Orchestra



SALLY CLARKE-BROMIG
SWR Symphony Orchestra, Stuttgart



VIRGINIA COMERFORD
Principal Viola and Section Leader – OAO



LISA GROSMAN
Head of Strings – Camberwell Grammar School; Melbourne Conservatorium Young Artists Academy, UoM; Former – Irish Chamber Orchestra; Director of the Viola Programme – Monash University



BENEDICT HAMES
Assistant Principal Viola – Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks; Former Acting Principal Viola – OAO



ANDRA ILZE DARZINS
Professor of Viola – University of Music, Stuttgart; Former Principal Viola – Hamburg Philharmonic Orchestra



STEPHEN KING
Lecturer of Viola – Elder Conservatorium of Music; Principal Viola – Australian Romantic & Classical Orchestra; Former – Australian String Quartet (ASQ); ACO



TAHLIA PETROSIAN
Director – KLASSIK Underground; Gewandhaus Orchestra, Leipzig



BENJAMIN ROSKAMS
IMP; Guest Principal Viola – BBC Symphony Orchestra; London Philharmonic Orchestra; Guest Concertmaster – Sinfonieorchester Aachen, Germany; Sinfonieorchester Wuppertal, Germany



ANDRA ULRICHS-KREDER
Basel Symphony Orchestra; Former Principal Viola – Festival Strings Lucerne

CELLO



TRISH DEAN
Co Artistic Director – Ensemble Q; Guest Principal – Queensland Symphony Orchestra (QSO); Former Associate Principal Cello – SSO



SHARON GRIGORYAN
Associate Principal Cello – ASO; Former – MSO; ASQ



MOLLY KADARAUCH
Sutherland Trio; UoM; Former Associate Principal Cello – ACO



VINCENT LO
Associate First Principal Cello – Gewandhaus Orchestra, Leipzig



SAM LUCAS
IMP – Hagen Philharmonic Orchestra; Ruhrstadt Symphony Orchestra; Cologne Sinfonietta



PETER MORRISON
Danish National Symphony Orchestra; Former – SSO, ACO



RICHARD NARROWAY
Lecturer of Cello – Melbourne Conservatorium of Music; Former Rebanks Fellow – Royal Conservatory of Music, Toronto



PEI-JEE NG
Principal Cello – Royal Scottish National Orchestra; Former Co-Principal Cello – London Philharmonic Orchestra; Fournier Trio



PEI-SIAN NG
Principal Cello – Singapore Symphony Orchestra; Faculty – Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, Singapore



JULIAN SMILES
Lecturer of Cello – Sydney Conservatorium of Music; Former Principal Cello – ACO; Guest Principal Cello – SSO; Guest Principal Cello – Auckland Philharmonia; Australia Ensemble; Co-Founder – Goldener String Quartet

AUSTRALIAN WORLD ORCHESTRA MARKING 15 YEARS OF EXCEPTIONAL PERFORMANCE IN 2026



MUSICIANS OF THE AUSTRALIAN WORLD ORCHESTRA

DOUBLE BASS



KYLIE DAVIES
Associate Principal Double Bass – OV



TIMOTHY DUNIN
Professor for Double Bass – University of Music and Performing Arts, Graz; Former – Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra



DAMIEN ECKERSLEY
Associate Principal Bass – NZSO; Deputy Artistic Director – ANAM; Former – MSO



HUGH KLUGER
Sub-Principal Bass – London Philharmonic Orchestra; Former Associate Principal – ASO



AXEL RUGE
Co-Principal Double Bass – WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln; Lecturer of Double Bass – Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst, Frankfurt; Lecturer of Double Bass – Musikhochschule Münster



ANDREW SINCLAIR
Principal Double Bass – WASO; Former – Vienna Symphony Orchestra



CIRO VIGILANTE
Principal Double Bass – Vienna Chamber Orchestra; Former – Prague Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra; ACO; Former Guest – German Chamber Philharmonic Bremen; Ensemble Stuttgart Varianti



JEREMY WATT
Sub-Principal Double Bass – City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra; Visiting Lecturer of Double Bass – Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

FLUTE



JESSIE GU
Associate Principal Flute – OV



ANDREW NICHOLSON
Principal Flute – WASO; Former Principal – Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra; Hallé Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra; BBC National Orchestra of Wales



LISA OSMIALOWSKI (LEWIS)
Associate Principal Flute – OAO; Guest Principal Piccolo – SSO

PICCOLO



SONIA CROUCHER
Principal Piccolo – WASO; Former Principal Piccolo – Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra

OBOE



NICK DEUTSCH
Professor of Oboe – Hochschule für Musik & Theatre, Leipzig; Former Artistic Director – ANAM; Former – Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Munich Philharmonic, Radio Orchestras of Cologne (WDR), Stuttgart (SWR), Frankfurt (HR) & Berlin (RSB & DSO)



LISA OUTRED
Oboe and Cor Anglais – Munich Philharmonic Orchestra

COR ANGLAIS



RIXON THOMAS
Principal Cor Anglais – The Royal Danish Orchestra; Former Principal Cor Anglais – NZSO; Copenhagen Philharmonic, Denmark; OAO

CLARINET



PAUL DEAN
Composer and IMP; Kinnane Professor of Music – University of Queensland; Co-Artistic Director – Ensemble Q



BENJAMIN MELLEFONT
Principal Clarinet – London Philharmonic Orchestra; Former Professor of Clarinet – Royal Academy of Music; Former Principal Clarinet – Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra



OLIVER BAHR SHERMACHER
Freiburg Philharmonisches Orchester; Former Guest Principal Clarinet – SSO

BASSOON



MATTHEW OCKENDEN
Associate Principal Bassoon – OAO; IMP – ACO



LYNDON WATTS
Professor of Bassoon – UoM; Former Principal Bassoon – Munich Philharmonic Orchestra



CHLOE TURNER
Principal Contrabassoon, Acting Associate Principal Bassoon – WASO

HORN



ANDREW BAIN
Principal Horn – Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, Mainly Mozart Festival, San Diego; Professor – Colburn School Conservatory of Music



GENEVIEVE CLIFFORD
Frankfurt Oper und Museums Orchester; Lecturer of Horn – The Hochschule für Musik Freiburg; Former – Essener Philharmoniker



PETER LUFF
Associate Professor in Horn and Head of Brass – Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University; Ensemble Q; President – International Horn Society; Former Associate Principal Horn – QSO



REBECCA LUTON
IMP – MSO, OV, TSO, QSO, OAO



CASEY RIPPON
Bayerische Staatsoper; Lecturer of Horn – University of Augsburg; Low Horn – Frankfurt Opera



NICOLA ROBINSON
Academist – Sinfonieorchester Basel



GREG STEPHENS
Principal 1st Horn – TSO; Former – Tiroler Sinfonieorchester Innsbruck

TRUMPET



LUKAS BENO
Principal Trumpet – Gewandhaus Orchestra, Leipzig



ALFRED CARSLAKE
QSO; Former Principal Trumpet – Ensemble Apex; Metropolitan Orchestra of Sydney; Former – Australian Youth Orchestra (AYO)



MARTIN PHILLIPSON
Associate Principal Trumpet – ASO



JENNA SMITH
Principal Trumpet – WASO; Former Trumpet Fellow – SSO; Former Principal Trumpet – AYO; 2016 AWO Academy Player

TROMBONE



TIMOTHY DOWLING
Principal Trombone – Residentie Orchestra (The Hague Philharmonic); Former Professor of Trombone – Royal Conservatorium, The Hague



MICHAEL MULCAHY
Chicago Symphony Orchestra; Director – CSO Brass; Professor of Trombone – Northwestern University; Chicago Chamber Musicians; Visiting Artist ANAM

BASS TROMBONE



SHANNON PITTAWAY
Principal Bass Trombone – NZSO; Head of Winds and Brass – New Zealand School of Music; Australian Brass Quintet; Former Principal Bass Trombone – Singapore Symphony Orchestra

TUBA



MATTHEW SEGGER
Principal Tuba – Osnabrück Symphony Orchestra; Heavy MäTtAL Quartet; Former Academist – Gewandhaus Orchestra, Leipzig

HARP



ALICE GILES AM
Lecturer of Harp – Sydney Conservatorium of Music and ANAM; Director – Seven Harp Ensemble; Artistic Director – World Harp Congress 2014, Sydney

TIMPANI



ANTOINE (TONY) BEDEWI
Principal Timpani – BBC Symphony Orchestra; Former Co-Principal Timpani – LSO

PERCUSSION



MATHEW LEVY
Section Principal Percussion – OV



BRENT MILLER
Head of Percussion – Melbourne Conservatorium of Music; Principal Timpani – Melbourne Chamber Orchestra; Former Acting Principal Timpani – MSO



PETER NEVILLE
Head of Percussion – ANAM



TRACEY PATTEN
TSO; Conductor – Tasmanian Youth Orchestra



ARCHITECTURE IN MUSIC x AUSTRALIAN WORLD ORCHESTRA

In 2025, the Australian World Orchestra joined forces with esteemed international photographer **Charles Brooks** to build his *Architecture in Music* portfolio with the instruments of our players. Together, we're proud to unveil the results of our collaboration to date, including a world first: an image that captures the interior of a Stradivarius violin.



Top left: Lisa Grosman's Giuseppe Vignali, Viola Giuseppe Vignali (1888–1918) began his career as a cooper before turning his attention to luthiery. He received honours at exhibitions in Rome, Milan, and Palermo, and seemed poised for greatness — but tragically passed away at just 30 years old. The few instruments that survive him are considered outstanding, and this viola is no exception. It remains in near-original condition, with the only alteration being a bass bar replacement in 1956 — carried out by an anonymous luthier who helpfully left the date inside. **Today, this instrument is played by AWO's Lisa Grosman, a Lecturer in Viola at Melbourne Conservatorium, University of Melbourne and Head of Strings at Camberwell Grammar School.**

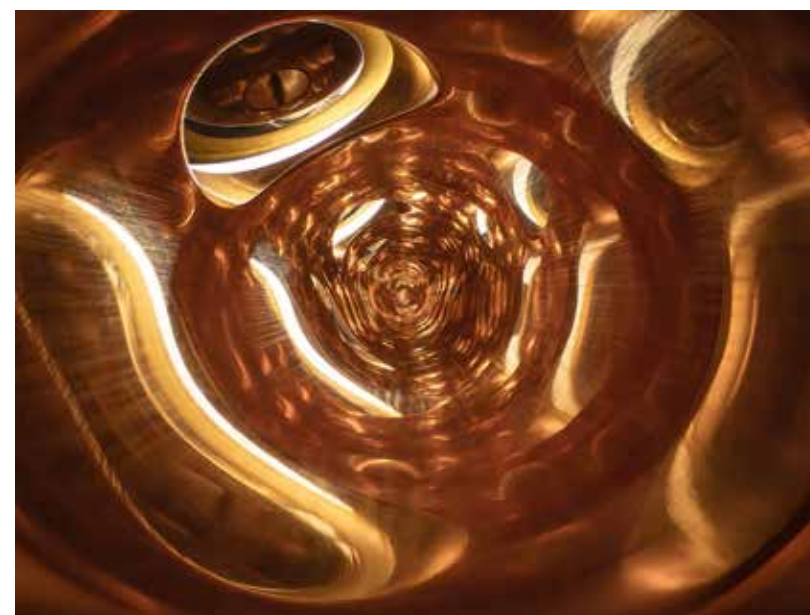
Top right and middle left: Jessie Gu's Muramatsu 14K Rose Gold Flute These two photographs depict the same instrument, taken just half a centimetre apart. The subject is a Muramatsu 14-karat rose gold flute — a model crafted with precision in Japan since 1923. The top right image was captured using a Laowa 24mm probe lens, which had its casing carefully melted down with a heat gun to fit inside the instrument's opening. In contrast, the middle-left image was taken with an adapted medical arthroscope that measures just 4mm across, the camera was placed at the base of the flute, shifting the angle of incidence dramatically and heightening the brilliance of the reflections within. **Today this instrument is played by AWO's Jessie Gu, Associate Principal Flute with Orchestra Victoria.**

Middle right: Molly Kadarauch's Pietro Antonio Testore, a 1763 Cello Pietro Antonio Testore, the last instrument maker of the Testore family of luthiers in Milan. Very few instruments are attributed to him and they're known for their rich characterful tone. This photograph offers a rare glimpse into the hidden history of a true workhorse of the cello world — a vessel of sound and soul that has never stopped playing. **Today this instrument is played by AWO's Molly Kadarauch, founder of the Sutherland Trio.**

Bottom: Daniel Dodd's 'ex Hämmerle - ex Baumgartner', a 1717 Stradivarius Violin From Stradivari's golden period, named after two of its distinguished former owners Theodor Hämmerle, the Viennese industrialist and collector, and Rudolf Baumgartner, the Swiss conductor and founder of the Lucerne Festival Strings. **Today, this outstanding violin continues its legacy in performance, played by AWO's Daniel Dodds, Artistic Director of the Lucerne Festival Strings. In 2025, Daniel performs as our concertmaster in Mahler's fifth symphony.**



Charles Brooks with Daniel Dodds and his Stradivarius violin.



SYMPHONY NO.4 IN G MAJOR



Drypoint etching by Emil Orlik (1902)

Bedächtig – Recht gemächlich [Deliberately – Really unhurried]
In gemächlicher Bewegung, ohne Hast [In a leisurely tempo, without haste]
Ruhevoll [Peacefully]
Sehr behaglich [Very homely and comfortable]

Sarah Traubel *soprano*

The Fourth Symphony is arguably Mahler's most uncomplicated and accessible orchestral work. While it is, at 55 minutes long, a large piece by Classical standards, it still falls easily enough into 'standard' symphonic form: a sonata-allegro opening movement, a scherzo and trio, an *adagio*, and then a rondo finale.

And yet, while it is not necessarily typical of some of his more elaborately structured symphonies, it is clearly a work of Mahler's, not least because its final movement is a setting from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (The Youth's Magic Horn, see box). It was not the first time Mahler had used a text from this early-Romantic anthology of German folksongs and poetry within the body of a symphony. The words which he sets here – beginning with the line 'Wir geniessen die himmlischen Freuden' (We taste the joys of heaven) – was originally intended for the Third Symphony, before being held over and becoming the structural focus of the Fourth.

As with virtually all his other major compositions, Mahler worked on the Fourth Symphony as a summer project – his conducting duties prevented him from sketching large-scale works during the rest of the year. It was written during the summers of 1899 and 1900, but the final movement, to which all roads within the symphony lead, was actually composed much earlier, perhaps even as far back as 1892. (The entire symphony was to be revised many times following its premiere in 1901, Mahler declaring it at one point to be a 'troubled step-child'.)

Like so many of his scores, Mahler's Fourth Symphony contains all the symptoms of anxiety and alienation Mahler shared with other fin-de-siècle artists, such as Munch, Wedekind, Strindberg and the young Schoenberg, but perhaps felt more keenly as a Jew who had turned Catholic to secure the directorship of the Vienna State Opera. Most notably we find the death-obsession and the paradoxical but understandable celebrations of life and the innocence of childhood. Specifically, in the Fourth Symphony these all come together in the final movement, where the text centres on a child's vision of paradise after death. In its apparent naivety it is almost embarrassing, in its musical setting it is touching, but in its philosophical implications and reflection of earthly suffering it is horrifying.

Yet that was always Mahler's gift and his curse: the ability to tinge even the simplest and sunniest musical experience with a kind of existential horror. This was specifically his aim in the opening movement of the Fourth Symphony, where the jingling sleigh bells and flutes which open the movement in jaunty folk rhythms (and which

are taken up again during the final movement) somehow, without setting out to do so, border on the hysterical. As Mahler himself said, the **first movement** is:

...an uninterrupted blue sky...but occasionally it is obscured and becomes strangely terrifying; yet it is not the sky itself which darkens in this way. Rather it is we who suddenly shudder, as one is frequently seized with a fit of panic on the clearest day in a forest otherwise streaming with light.

To achieve this effect, Mahler employs a smaller orchestra than in his other symphonies, dispensing completely with trombones and tuba. After the sleigh bells establish the theme which is to reappear so dramatically in the final movement, the main subject of the first movement – a lilting, 'Viennese' melody – enters in the first violins, before being taken up by the horns, woodwind and lower strings. A secondary subject, announced by the cellos in unison, then gives way to a duet for oboe and bassoon, and the jingling and joyous mood continues through the development (some of which is in a radiant A major, as if to foreshadow the progressive tonality of subsequent Mahler symphonies).

But ultimately the movement reaches a climax in C major, in which triumphant horn and trumpet fanfares without warning transform themselves into nightmarish visions. It is an unforgettable passage, but somehow, out of the squeals of Hades, the 'happy' mood inexplicably returns, as if oblivious to what has preceded it, and the movement continues on to its naïve and blissfully indifferent conclusion.

YOUTH'S MAGIC HORN

Des Knaben Wunderhorn was originally an anthology of Germanic folk poetry from the early 19th century. Collected by Arnim and Brentano, and published in 1805–08, the collection became immensely popular, informing literary styles and culture for much of the century. Mahler is believed to have been acquainted with the style and texts of the *Wunderhorn* collection well before he set any of the poems in his *Lieder*. In setting these texts to music, Mahler reinterpreted the fairytale, mediæval-style poems through his own personal experience, and song settings of the *Wunderhorn* texts with their orchestral accompaniment became the basis of symphonic movements in Mahler's first four symphonies.

These blithe descents from radiance into the macabre and back again continue in the **scherzo**, to which Mahler ascribed the note 'Death takes the fiddle'. Death's fiddle is tuned a tone higher, to bring out a suitably eerie folk-fiddling sound, making it necessary for the concertmaster to have two violins on hand, differently tuned. In Mahler's words: 'The scherzo is so strange, almost sinister, that your hair may stand on end.' Beginning in C minor in the horn and woodwinds, the movement is based on a ländler theme and as it develops it becomes a kind of contorted Dance of Death. The central trio section is more relaxed but it cannot hold the 'Death's fiddle' tune at bay for long.

Mahler once told Bruno Walter that the **slow movement** of the Fourth Symphony was inspired by the vision of a church sepulchre, complete with reclining stone figures of the dead, 'their arms closed in eternal peace'. Certainly this beautiful Adagio in G major presents a more peaceful vision of death than the movements which precede it.

Essentially a set of free variations on two poignant themes, the movement begins with a sublime melody in the strings over a plucked bass. As the development proceeds, the key leaps into E major with the French horns and trumpets leading the way in a premonition of the finale's main theme, before the vision fades and the reestablishment of G major brings the Adagio to its quiet conclusion.

The main melody of the **finale** begins in the clarinet but is soon taken up by the soprano soloist. Singing a folk-like (almost yodelling) tune in G, the soloist, assuming the persona of a child, proclaims that all is gentle and peaceful in heaven. The jaunty theme continues through the stanzas, but is brought to a halt at the end of each section by an unspeakably beautiful, chorale-like descending phrase. The occurrence of this phrase on the rather prosaic line 'The angels, they bake the bread' is a good example of how the music overwhelms the text at this point of sublime beauty.

As the music halts in this timeless zone, the first movement's sleigh bell theme returns with more vigour and agitation than before, as if the poignant stillness were being interrupted by some coarse and insistent memory of less innocent times. Three times this occurs, before the infernal sleigh-ride slows and passes into E major, where at last the heavens can proclaim, 'No music on earth can compare with ours.'

At the end of this most sublime masterpiece of symphonic composition, it is very difficult not to feel Mahler at least came close.

Martin Buzacott
Symphony Australia © 1997

FINALE

Wir geniessen die himmlischen Freuden
d'rum thun wir das Irdische meiden.
Kein weltlich' Getümmel
hört man nicht im Himmell!
Lebt Alles in sanftester Ruh'!
Wir führen ein englisches Leben!
Sind dennoch ganz lustig daneben!
Wir tanzen und springen
wir hüpfen und singen!
Sanct Peter in Himmel sieht zu!

Johannes das Lämmlein auslasset,
der Metzger Herodes drauf passet!
Wir führen ein geduldig's,
unschuldig's, geduldig's,
ein liebliches Lämmlein zu Tod!
Sanct Lucas den Ochsen thät schlachten
ohn' einig's Bedenken und Achten,
der Wein kost kein Heller
im himmlischen Keller,
die Englein, die backen das Brot.

Gut' Kräuter von allerhand Arten,
die wachsen im himmlischen Garten!
Gut' Spargel, Fisolen,
und was wir nur wollen!
Ganze Schüsseln voll sind uns bereit!
Gut' Äpfel, gut' Birn' und gut' Trauben!
Die Gärtner, die Alles erlauben!
Willst Rehbock, willst Hasen,
Auf offener Strassen
sie laufen herbei!

Sollt ein Fasttag etwa kommen
alle Fische gleich mit Freuden angeschwommen!
Dort läuft schon Sanct Peter
mit Netz und mit Köder
zum himmlischen Weiher hinein.
Sanct Martha die Köchin muss sein!

Kein Musik ist ja nicht auf Erden,
die uns'rer verglichen kann werden.
Elftausend Jungfrauen
zu tanzen sich trauen!
Sanct Ursula selbst dazu lacht!
Kein Musik ist ja nicht auf Erden,
die uns'rer verglichen kann werden.
Cäcilia mit ihren Verwandten
sind treffliche Hofmusikanten!
Die englischen Stimmen
ermuntern die Sinnen!
dass Alles für Freuden erwacht.

We taste the joys of Heaven
leaving behind all that is earthly.
No worldly strife
is heard in Heaven.
We live here in sweetest peace!
We live an angelic life,
yet we are merry as can be.
We dance and spring
and skip and sing
while St Peter in heaven looks on.

St John lets the lamb go running,
the butcher Herod is waiting for it.
We lead the patient,
meek, guiltless
dear little Lambkin to death!
St Luke is slaughtering the oxen
without care or consideration,
The wine is free
in the heavenly tavern,
and the angels, they bake the bread.

Fine vegetables of every kind
grow in the gardens of Heaven,
good asparagus and beans,
whatever we fancy,
big bowls are prepared for us!
Good apples and pears and grapes!
The gardeners let us take all!
Do you want a roebuck or hare?
Here in the open streets
they run about!

And when there is a fast day
the fish come swarming in merrily!
St Peter, he runs
with net and with bait
to fish in the heavenly pond.
St Martha is the cook, who else?

No music on earth
can compare with ours.
Eleven thousand virgins
come forward to dance!
Even St Ursula laughs to see that!
No music on earth
can compare with ours.
Cecilia and her relations
are excellent court musicians!
The angelic voices
lift our spirits
and all things awaken to joy!

Translation by Hedwig Roediger
ABC/Symphony Australia © 1986

SYMPHONY NO.5 IN C SHARP MINOR

Mahler's first four symphonies were more or less programmatic in their intention, drawing their inspiration from folk poetry, incorporating themes from songs, and (in all but the first) using the human voice in one or more of the movements. The Fifth Symphony, on the other hand, revealed no obvious program and was scored for orchestra alone.

It was written in 1901–02 around the time of Mahler's meeting with, and rather hasty betrothal to, Alma Schindler. While no period in Mahler's life could be described as unequivocally happy, there is no doubt that the Fifth Symphony was conceived at a time of substantial personal and professional satisfaction. Yet any sign of outward pleasure or optimism tends to be avoided, at least early on in the symphony – pointedly, and notoriously, it begins with a funeral march.

Mahler's friend Natalie Bauer-Lechner recalled Mahler speaking to her about the symphony he was writing in his hut in the woods during the summer of 1901:

Within the last few days Mahler has spoken to me for the first time about his work this summer, his Fifth Symphony, and in particular about the third movement: 'The movement is immensely difficult to work out because of the structure and the supreme artistic mastery which it demands in all its relationships and details...The human voice would be utterly out of place here. There is no call for words, everything is said in purely musical terms. It will be a straightforward symphony in four movements too, with each movement independent and complete in itself and related to the others only by the common mood.'

Mahler worked on the first two movements and part of the third movement during the summer of 1901. The rest of the symphony was completed the following summer, by which point Alma Schindler (whom he had met in November 1901) was very much part of his life. In her memoirs, Alma recalled the couple going to Maiernigg in June 1902:

Mahler had the sketches of the Fifth Symphony with him. Two movements were completed, the rest were being drafted. I tried to play the piano softly, but when I asked him, he [said that he] had heard me, although his working cabin was located far away in the woods. Thereafter I changed my activities...In the process I gradually became a real help to him.

By the autumn of 1902 the Fifth Symphony was complete and Mahler played it for his new wife: It was the first time that he played a new work for me. Arm in arm we walked solemnly up to

Part I

Trauermarsch (In gemessenem Schritt. Streng. Wie ein Kondukt)

[Funeral march (With measured pace, stern, like a funeral procession)]

Stürmisch bewegt. Mit grösster Vehemenz

[Stormy, with utmost vehemence]

Part II

Scherzo (Kräftig, nicht zu schnell) [Strong, not too fast]

Part III

Adagietto (Sehr langsam) [Very slow]

Rondo – Finale (Allegro)

his studio in the woods. Soon afterwards the vacation was over, and we moved to Vienna. The Fifth was completed, and he worked all winter on the final copy.

When the premiere took place in Cologne on 18 October 1904, the reception was mixed. The great conductor and early champion of Mahler's music, Bruno Walter, clearly remembered the occasion for 'a particular reason':

...it was the first and, I think, the only time that a performance of a Mahler work under his own baton left me unsatisfied. The instrumentation did not succeed in bringing out clearly the complicated contrapuntal fabric of the parts, and Mahler complained to me afterwards that he never seemed able to master the handling of the orchestra: in fact, he later subjected the orchestration to the most radical revision that he ever felt obliged to undertake.

Walter was not alone; Richard Strauss, also an admirer of Mahler's music, had reservations after witnessing a further performance of the symphony



The first page of the *Adagietto* from Mahler's Fifth Symphony. Willem Mengelberg's conducting score is marked up in red and blue, together with a brief poem, which he has written into the left-hand margin. Mengelberg's annotations also include, in the top right corner: 'N.B. This *Adagietto* was Gustav Mahler's declaration of love to Alma! Instead of a letter he sent her this in manuscript; no accompanying words. She understood and wrote to him: he should come!!! Both told me this! W.M.' And at the bottom of the page: 'If music is a language, then it is one here – "he" tells her everything in "tones" and "sounds" in: music.'

some months later. Revision after revision ensued, beginning with the overwritten percussion parts and following through into the entire orchestration. So thorough was Mahler's reworking that, even as the symphony's popularity grew, each performance was different from the previous. 'The Fifth is an accused work,' Mahler wrote. 'No one understands it!'

The symphony follows Mahler's principle of 'progressive tonality', working its way from the beginning in C sharp minor to a conclusion in a triumphant D major. On its travels it passes through a vast range of moods and emotions – 'passionate, wild, pathetic, sweeping, solemn, gentle, full of all the emotions of the human heart' in Bruno Walter's memorable description. A massive work, it is in three parts and five movements (rather than the four movements Mahler had planned in 1901).

The **first movement** begins with a distinctive trumpet call which recurs as the movement proceeds, and which Mahler noted in the score should be played 'somewhat hurriedly, in the manner of military fanfares'. Like Berlioz and Tchaikovsky before him, Mahler opens with a funeral march and the first movement itself is filled with pain and grief.

As if to belie the claim that the symphony is 'absolute' rather than 'programmatic' music, the main theme is actually based on a song by Mahler called *Der Tamboursg'sell* – a song about a drummer boy facing execution. There are two trios in the movement: the first in B flat minor with a brief violin theme, the second a quieter section in A minor following the return of the march theme. After an impassioned climax toward the end, the movement dies away amid echoes of the opening trumpet call.

Mahler leaves no doubt as to the intended mood of the **second movement** – marked 'Stormy, with utmost vehemence'. Much of the material in this allegro movement derives from that in the first and there is a distinct reminiscence of the march rhythms. A brass chorale in part anticipates the conclusion of the symphony as a whole; after some distinctly sinister turns, the main themes of the allegro return as the movement ends quietly and ominously.

The **Scherzo**, which forms the third movement, is another matter altogether. Its energetic main thematic material is in the form of a joyous ländler. Ideas tumble over themselves in an inventive contrapuntal display while a slower waltz theme is juxtaposed with the main material. Contrasting trios add a more sombre note and in one of these there occurs a striking obbligato passage for the principal horn.

The **Adagietto** – arguably the most famous single movement in all the Mahler symphonies – is essentially a song without words. Scored for harps and strings alone, it is closely related to Mahler's song *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen* (I am lost to the world). According to Mahler's colleague, Dutch conductor Willem Mengelberg, the *Adagietto* was intended as a declaration of love for Alma and was composed shortly after the couple met. More like a fascinated bystander than a conductor, Mengelberg wrote in his score:

Instead of a letter, he sent her this in manuscript, no accompanying words. She understood and wrote to him: he should come!!! Both have told me this!...If music is a language, then it is one here. He tells her *everything* in tones and sounds, in: music.

And also in Mengelberg's score at the beginning of the *Adagietto* was the following brief poem, presumably written by Mahler himself:

*Wie ich Dich liebe
Du meine Sonne
Ich kann mit Worten Dir's nicht sagen
Nur meine Sehnsucht kann ich Dir klagen
Und meine Liebe
Meine Wonne!*

(How I love you, my sun, I cannot tell you in words, I can only pour out to you my longing and my love, my delight!)

The *Adagietto* gained a wider audience when used in the soundtrack for Visconti's film *Death in Venice*.

The **Rondo–Finale** shares material with each of the previous four movements, particularly the *Funeral March* and the *Adagietto*. The movement is a joyous (*giocoso*) celebration which begins with a series of folk-like figures on solo wind instruments. (The opening of the movement quotes the witty *Lob des hohen Verstandes* (In Praise of Higher Understanding) from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*.) The main rondo theme is first stated on the horns and the other ideas are woven contrapuntally around this as counter-subjects. When the main melody from the *Adagietto* returns it is so transformed with energy that it is practically unrecognisable. The development is elaborate, and the movement as a whole works its way towards the ecstatic brass chorale of the conclusion – as close as the melancholy Mahler ever came to writing an 'Ode to Joy'.

Martin Buzacott
Symphony Australia © 1997

Program notes and translation reprinted with the permission of Symphony Services Australia

THE VIEW FROM THE PODIUM

We spoke to Alex Briger about Mahler's Fourth and Fifth symphonies.

MAHLER FOUR was the first Mahler symphony I heard and it means a lot to me on a personal level. I hear it as a premonition of the tragedy of the Holocaust. Over the four movements we experience childhood innocence, the arrival of the devil, and tragedy; ultimately finding peace in heaven.

It's compact for Mahler – less than an hour. Surprisingly, there are no trombones or tuba in the orchestra, which creates a neoclassical sound world. What's fascinating is that nearly every note of this symphony has a marking of some sort: accents, dynamic and expression markings. Nothing is left to chance.

The **first movement** is playful with childlike melodies and jingling bells. But the simplicity is deceptive because Mahler develops the melodies in incredibly complex ways.

In the **second movement** you'll notice the concertmaster is playing a 'mistuned' violin, with each string under high tension. The effect is weird, and we're meant to hear it as a *danse macabre* with Death playing his fiddle. But then Mahler keeps interrupting it with moments of beauty.

The **third movement** is the longest (20 minutes). The music is filled with foreboding and the premonition of tragedy – not so much personal tragedy as tragedy for the human race. Listen for the weeping melodies and the incredible harmonies that don't seem to resolve. It's difficult to put into words how this music affects the soul. It brings me to tears – I'm terribly affected by it. In the final minutes, the music suddenly explodes and this 'little' orchestra is playing as loud as it possibly can, creating a huge majestic sound. It's like an angel descending to Earth and this is when I get the soprano to walk out on stage – it creates a visual statement to match this amazing, dramatic climax. And after this explosion there's a magical, yearning passage for strings and harp.

In the **finale** you'll want to follow the poem on page 23, because it's very descriptive and Mahler replicates everything in the music. Things like a solo double bass imitating the ox – very literal. It's harsh in places, even grotesque, but then the music changes completely, as if to say there's no music on earth as beautiful as this dreamy vision of heaven. And the ending is special: cor anglais, harp and then a single double bass note, dying away to nothing.

MAHLER FIVE is Mahler's most recognisable symphony – partly because of the opening trumpet call, partly because of the *Adagietto*. But what most people don't realise is how technically difficult it is. It's especially challenging for the strings – it doesn't let up, there's so much fast passagework, and everyone is utterly exhausted at the end.

The **first movement** is a Funeral March, which invites comparison with the third movement of Mahler's First Symphony – is it tragedy or parody? The percussion section has an important part to play. This movement forms a pair with the stormy **second movement**, which is enormous, complex and frantic. There's so much going on, and Mahler creates a sense of 'frustration' – delaying the feeling of harmonic resolution and making us wait to enjoy the big melody at the climax.

The **Scherzo** is the longest movement in the symphony (20 minutes), and it's every horn player's dream: a Viennese waltz that's also a miniature 'concerto' for the principal horn. The contrasts are amazing: sometimes the horn sounds weirdly distant, sometimes the orchestra goes ballistic, and there are these dreamy, otherworldly duets between the principal and third horns.

Compared to the adagio in Mahler Four, the **Adagietto** is shorter, more intimate and much simpler. Mahler creates harmonic tension between the first violins and the basses – high and low with 'nothing' in the middle. We have an almost physical need for aural dissonance to be resolved, and Mahler keeps us on edge, with heart and brain begging for resolution. Then, just as you think it's finally finished, the horn suddenly interrupts and takes us straight into the finale.

The **Finale** is the movement I recommend when people ask: 'What's the first Mahler I should listen to?' For pure excitement nothing matches it. It begins with solo instruments – horn, bassoon, oboe, clarinet – then the strings come in with fugal writing; busy, weaving musical lines, always on the move. And this is how Mahler builds up to not one but two climaxes. It's exhilarating and it really brings the house down.

Mahler Four and **Mahler Five** are completely different in character: Four is childlike in a way and quite conservative; with the Fifth Symphony, Mahler is moving on. At the same time, the finale of Mahler Four sets up the trumpet melody that opens Mahler Five, and it's interesting to hear them together. The music goes through so many different moods, covering a vast emotional journey – you could almost hear tonight's concert as one massive symphony in nine movements.

THANK YOU TO OUR BUSINESS AND MEDIA PARTNERS

KEY PARTNER



UNIVERSITY PARTNER



MAJOR SPONSOR



ACADEMY PARTNER



ACCOMMODATION PARTNERS



SYDNEY EDUCATION PARTNER



VENUE PARTNER

Museum of Contemporary Art Australia

BEVERAGE PARTNER



CORPORATE PARTNER



CREATIVE PARTNER

3 DEEP

CONCERT PARTNER



MEDIA PARTNERS



The Saturday Paper



THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS AND SUPPORTERS*



IN GRATEFUL MEMORY OF CHRISTOPHER WILLIAM ADAMS FLYNN

1939–2024

Christopher Flynn, devoted husband, father and grandfather, treasured the transformative beauty of music, especially live music. He was a passionate supporter of the AWO from its earliest days, recognising its value not only for musicians and their friends but for Australian cultural life as a whole. Throughout his life he gave generously and enthusiastically, to causes that honoured human dignity and cultural richness. He loved to support bold new initiatives, which is what sparked his interest in the AWO. While in England, he supported a small opera company that brings rare classical operas to life for modern-day audiences. He firmly believed in encouraging the next generation of musicians and was committed to fostering musical education where it was most needed, acknowledging the place of music in a well-lived, faithful life. His lifelong commitment to supporting the arts, especially music, leaves a deep imprint on all who knew him.

MACKERRAS CIRCLE MEMBERS

(\$50,000)

The Mackerras Circle, named in honour of our inaugural patron – the late Sir Charles Mackerras CH AC CBE, represents the Australian World Orchestra’s highest level of individual support.

The Estate of Sir Charles and Judy Mackerras
The Lord Glendonbrook CBE, AM through The Glendonbrook Foundation
Naomi Milgrom AC
Harold Mitchell Foundation

Neilson Foundation
Ezekiel Solomon AM
Gabrielle Thompson AM and Neil Thompson
Peter Weiss AO (dec’d)
Carla Zampatti AC (dec’d)

FOUNDING GOVERNORS PROGRAMME

(\$15,000 DONATION)

The Australian World Orchestra acknowledges the vision of our Founding Governors who each donated \$15,000 and were instrumental in the establishment of the Australian World Orchestra as a permanent fixture on the Australian classical music scene.

Marc Besen AC (dec’d) and Eva Besen AO (dec’d)
Ian Breedon and Clare Bower
Deborah Chadwick
Ron and Katie Dewhurst
Mr and Mrs C.W.A. Flynn
Kerry Gardner
Maria Teresa Hooke OAM and John Hooke CBE (dec’d)
Paolo A.L. Hooke
Peter Jopling AM QC
Andrew Kaldor AM and Renata Kaldor AO
Louise and Martyn Myer Foundation
John and Lois McKay

Naomi Milgrom AC
Martyn Myer AO
Naphtali Family Foundation
Susan Pelka and Richard Caven
Harish Rao and Monica Pahuja
Dr TJ Rao OAM (dec’d)
Ezekiel Solomon AM
Gabrielle Thompson AM and Neil Thompson
Bret Walker AO SC
Peter Weiss AO (dec’d)
Peter Yates AM
Carla Zampatti AC (dec’d)
Anonymous (2)

ORCHESTRAL SUPPORTER PROGRAMME

The Australian World Orchestra is staffed by a small, dedicated management team who work tirelessly to bring the Australian World Orchestra vision to life. We seek and value your support that enables the Australian World Orchestra to continue to deliver our exciting plans over the next three years. These programs are:

WATTLE CLUB

(\$30,000 OVER 3 YEARS OR ONE-OFF DONATION)

David Gonski AC
Maria Teresa Hooke OAM and Paolo Hooke
Felicity Rourke and Justice François Kunc

Gabrielle Thompson AM and Neil Thompson
Roslyn Packer AC
Ezekiel Solomon AM

2025 CONCERT SERIES SUPPORTERS

Our Player Support Programme is your opportunity to support Australian World Orchestra players for the 2025 concert season where 100% of your donation goes directly towards the costs associated with supporting our players to perform.

OPAL SUPPORTERS

(\$5,000 AND ABOVE)

The Griffin Foundation (in support of Andrew Nicholson, Flute)
Christopher Flynn (dec’d) (in support of Nick Deutsch, Oboe)
Paula Flynn (in support of Daniel Dodds, Violin)
McEvoy Family 5 (in support of Katherine Lukey, Violin)
Ezekiel Solomon (in support of Sharon Grigoryan, Cello)
The Goodridge Foundation (in support of Noam Yaffe, Violin)
Mary-Jane Gething AO (in support of Sola Hughes, Violin, 2025 Academy Player)
Alex Eady, David Allingham, Susan Acret, Dr Renata Das and Bryce Thompson (in support of Casey Rippon, Horn)
Ian and Clare Breedon, Carl and Alli McCamish and Deborah Burdett (in support of Wilma Smith, Violin)
Jason Gellert and Miles Drury (in support of Martin Phillipson)
Dr Payal Saxena (in support of Alice Giles)

GEM SUPPORTERS

(\$4,999 AND UNDER)

Sai Subhanu Abbaraju
Crispin Conroy AM
Gabrielle Thompson AM
Dr Anne Amigo
Colin Mackerras AO
Margot Bain
Marta Bassanetti
Richard Bloor
Ian and Clare Breedon
Elizabeth Briger
Roger Buckley
Alison Carmine
Andrew and Katrina Cartwright
Frank Celata
Fran Clark
Peter and Anne Clarke
Nola Cooke
Chris Arnold AM and Margot Costanzo
Giving Culture
Robert Dickinson
Mrs Anne E Dineen
Peter and Theresa Dodds
Miles Drury
Regan and Edwin
Douglas Farrell
Margaret Fittock
Susan Coles and Daniel Fitzpatrick
Edward Dawson-Damer and Jo Grant
Edward Griffin
Jane Grover
Nicholas James Gurney
Guy Haslehurst
Cathy Huang
Qian Ting Huang
Michael Hutchinson

Sarah Johns
Laurence Kalnin
Rosie Keane
Igor Klein
Jo Lynch
Carl and Alli McCamish
Ian and Pam McGaw
Jeffrey and Anna Mellefont
Alana Mitchell
Jenny Nevin
Cornelis Nieuwendyk
Joan Noble
Peter Norris
John and Deanne O’Connor
Patrick Ong
Matthew O’Sullivan
George Palmer AM KC and Penny Palmer
Belinda Paterson
Felicity Rourke
Antonio Rullo
Wayne Shafton
Xavier Shea
Deborah Shermacher
Weintraubs Syncopators
Colin Taylor
Michael Taylor
Michael Thompson
Michael Tomlinson
Christine Toner
Noam White
Robin M Youl
Anonymous (10)

EDUCATION SUPPORTERS

(\$5,000 AND UNDER)

Bunny Gardiner-Hill
Carolyn Flynn
Dalia Stanley

Paolo Hooke
Anonymous (1)

BEQUESTS

Lilla Ito
Anonymous (3)

*This donor list is current as of 15 August 2025

OUR PHILANTHROPISTS HAVE MADE THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE! To find out how you can support the Australian World Orchestra, contact Gabrielle Thompson AM on 02 8283 4527 or gthompson@australianworldorchestra.com.au for more information.

AUSTRALIAN WORLD ORCHESTRA
ACADEMY PLAYERS:

- 2011

Sophia Ang percussion – Taiko; Moorambilla Voices 2018

Matthew Laing viola – Freelance player and composer

Liisa Palandi violin – Australian Chamber Orchestra

Adam Szabo cello – Returned to Australian World Orchestra in 2016; Manchester Collective; Melbourne Ring Orchestra; BBC and Royal Philharmonic Orchestras
- 2013

Katie Yap viola – Returned to Australian World Orchestra in 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2021; Chrysalis Trio
- 2015

Melina Van Leeuwen harp – Returned to Australian World Orchestra in 2019 and 2023; Chrysalis Trio

Samuel Payne cello – Canberra Symphony Orchestra; Former Australian Youth Orchestra (AYO)
- 2016

Jonathan Békés cello – Principal cello – Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra; AWO (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2022)

Ben Messenger horn – Momentum Ensemble; Melbourne Ring Orchestra;

Jenna Smith trumpet – Principal Trumpet – WASO; Former Trumpet Fellow – SSO; Former Principal Trumpet – AYO; AWO (2025)
- 2017

Education collaboration with the Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM), with all participating students experiencing the Australian World Orchestra’s Academy Programme
- 2018

Molly Collier-O’Boyle viola – Freelance Guest Principal; Former Acting Associate Principal Viola, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra

Sagar Nagaraj violin – Concertmaster, Australian Indian Orchestra; Willoughby Symphony Orchestra; Australian World Orchestra Academy Quartet
- 2019

Sergio Insuasti viola – 2021 graduate of the Royal College of Music, London

Emily Newham horn – Freelance; Former Horn Fellow, SSO
- 2021

Marcus Michelsen violin – MSO Academy
- 2022

Emily Beauchamp violin – 2nd Violin – MSO

Che Ioannou-Booth double bass – Freelance; University of Melbourne (UOM)

Jason Henery double bass – Principal Double Bass, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
- 2023

Sara Barbagallo violin – Concertmaster, UOM Symphony Orchestra; AYO
- 2025

Sola Hughes violin – Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM)

2025
AUSTRALIAN
WORLD
ORCHESTRA
ACADEMY
PROGRAMME

The Australian World Orchestra Academy is a dynamic professional development initiative run alongside the Australian World Orchestra’s annual concert season. Designed for emerging classical musicians, the Academy offers an invaluable opportunity for pre-professional artists to gain real-world orchestral experience. Participants rehearse, perform, and tour with the orchestra, working alongside some of the finest musicians in the country.

Proudly supported by Arab Bank Australia Limited (ABAL), the Academy continues to nurture the next generation of Australian talent. Now in its seventh year, ABAL’s partnership with the Australian World Orchestra reflects a shared commitment to excellence in the arts. Supporting young musicians as they grow both artistically and personally is a point of pride for the bank, and a testament to the enduring impact of this collaboration



2025 Academy Programme player, Sola Hughes

2025
AUSTRALIAN
WORLD
ORCHESTRA
EDUCATION
PROGRAMME

In 2025 the Australian World Orchestra (AWO) is delighted to continue our vibrant collaboration with the University of Melbourne and the Regional Youth Orchestra, providing unparalleled opportunities for the next generation of classical musicians.

The AWO’s Education Programme is dedicated to nurturing the talents of pre-professional musicians, aiding their career development, and fuelling the aspirations of young students who dream of one day joining the AWO.

Our programme this year has been enriched with tutorials, masterclasses, rehearsal attendance, Q&A’s and a unique side-by-side concert performance, all guided by some of Australia’s most esteemed musicians.

These extraordinary experiences have been made possible by the generous support of our Education Partners.



VICTORIA

Since 2022, the Australian World Orchestra has proudly collaborated with the University of Melbourne as its exclusive university partner, uniting artistic excellence with academic leadership to foster a global cultural dialogue.

This partnership provides emerging musicians with the chance to engage directly with Australia’s leading classical artists – many of whom perform on the international stage. It opens the door to invaluable professional experiences, collaboration, and mentorship.

Students of the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music gain access to a rich program of activities, including instrumental masterclasses, open rehearsals, career development sessions, and interactive talks with AWO musicians and celebrated conductors.

Professor Richard Kurth, Director of the Melbourne Conservatorium, reflected on the collaboration: “The AWO musicians are wonderful role models and excellent mentors. Their presence is a source of inspiration and motivation for our students. This partnership brings energy and opportunity to our community and supports students as they build their careers with confidence and connection to a broader international network.”

NSW

The Australian World Orchestra is proud to continue its longstanding partnership with the NSW Regional Youth Orchestra, marking over a decade of collaboration. This valued relationship provides a platform for AWO musicians to mentor talented young artists from 17 regional conservatoriums across New South Wales.

The RYO is a selective, audition-based ensemble that showcases the depth of musical talent in regional NSW. It offers extraordinary opportunities for students to rehearse and perform alongside their peers while learning from world-class conductors, orchestras, and educators. A highlight of the programme is the AWO’s intensive workshops – an immersive experience designed to inspire, challenge, and elevate the next generation of Australian musicians.

2025 EDUCATION CONCERT

The NSW Education Programme will culminate on Sunday 7 September with *A Time to Shine!* – a celebratory concert at Verbruggen Hall, Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

This inspiring performance will unite the talented young musicians of the Regional Youth Orchestra (RYO) with some of Australia’s most esteemed classical artists, offering a unique side-by-side experience that brings mentorship to life on stage.

The program will be Mahler’s Symphony No. 1 – a bold and evocative work that showcases the technical skill and musicality the RYO students have developed through their time honing their skills with the AWO.

A Time to Shine! will be a memorable concert for performers and audience alike, celebrating the transformative power of music and the extraordinary opportunities made possible by the AWO’s Education Programme.

Participating Conservatoriums: Central Coast, Clarence Valley, Coffs Harbour Regional, Mitchell, New England, Northern Rivers, Orange, Riverina, Tamworth, Upper Hunter, and Wollongong.



CREDITS

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND CHIEF CONDUCTOR

Alexander Briger AO

ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR

Louis Sharpe

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Douglas Farrell **Chair**
Gabrielle Thompson AM
Frank Celata
Miles Drury
Crispin Conroy AM
Alex King
Felicity Rourke
Neil Thompson
Karen Williams

PROGRAMME PHOTOGRAPHY CREDITS

Jimmy Pozarik
Mike Pozarik
Prudence Upton
Anna Kucera
David Collins
Heidi Victoria
Ken Leanfore
Mark Allan
Mehli Mehta Music Foundation
Erin White
Adelaide Symphony Orchestra
Miki Tsunoda
Pia Johnson
Claudio-Raschella
Edward Mulvihill
Guy Davies
Keith Saunders
Bri Hammond

STAFF

Chief Executive Officer	Gabrielle Thompson AM
Executive and Philanthropy Assistant, Education Manager, Concert Programme Manager	Tara Burnes
Executive Manager, Corporate Partnerships	Gabrielle Waters
Tour and Project Manager, Artist Liaison	Lilla Ito
Orchestral Operations Manager	James Foster
Executive Manager, Marketing and Communications	Anna Cochrane
Marketing and Communications Coordinator	Claire O'Connor
Finance Director	Neil Thompson
Accounts Assistant	Millan Thompson
Ticketing Manager	Sarah Zhu
Ticketing Assistant	Hans Sangtoki
Librarian	Katia Geha
Assistant Artistic Director	Christina Leonard
Assistant Orchestral Operations	Ami Humphreys

SERVICE AGENCIES

Auditors	Brogan & Co. Pty Ltd
Design and Branding	3DEEP
Marketing Printer	Dashing Solutions
I.T Servicing	Nano Solutions
Media Agency	NUNN Media
Publicity	Miranda Brown Publicity
Website Management	Interactive Investor
Website and Graphic Design	Agraphique
Travel	Stage and Screen
	Murrays Coaches
	Grange Cars
	Fiji Bob's Taxis Service

SPECIAL THANKS

Ákos Armont, Susan Bird, Jennifer Booth, Daniel Boud, Elizabeth Briger, Nicky Briger, Patrick Brennan, Charles Brooks, Leo Brogan, Daniel Burns, Emily Choo, Shauna Currenti, Monica Curro, Aaron Curran, Paul Doyle, Dashed Eck, Felicity Elliot, Yvonne Frindle, Eric Gardner, Evelyn Hawkins, Patricia Higgins, Cinzia Jeffery, Richard Kurth, Christina Leonard, Susan Leithhead, Jodi Matterson, Andrew McEvoy, Victoria Middleton, Sir Jonathan Mills AC, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Andrew Murray, Michael Napthali, JK Power, Helen Schleiger, Ezekiel Solomon AM, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Stephanie Tran, Miki Tsunoda, Adam Wills, and Hamilton.

Playbill This is a PLAYBILL / SHOWBILL publication.
Playbill Proprietary Limited / Showbill Proprietary Limited ACN 003 311 064 ABN 27 003 311 064

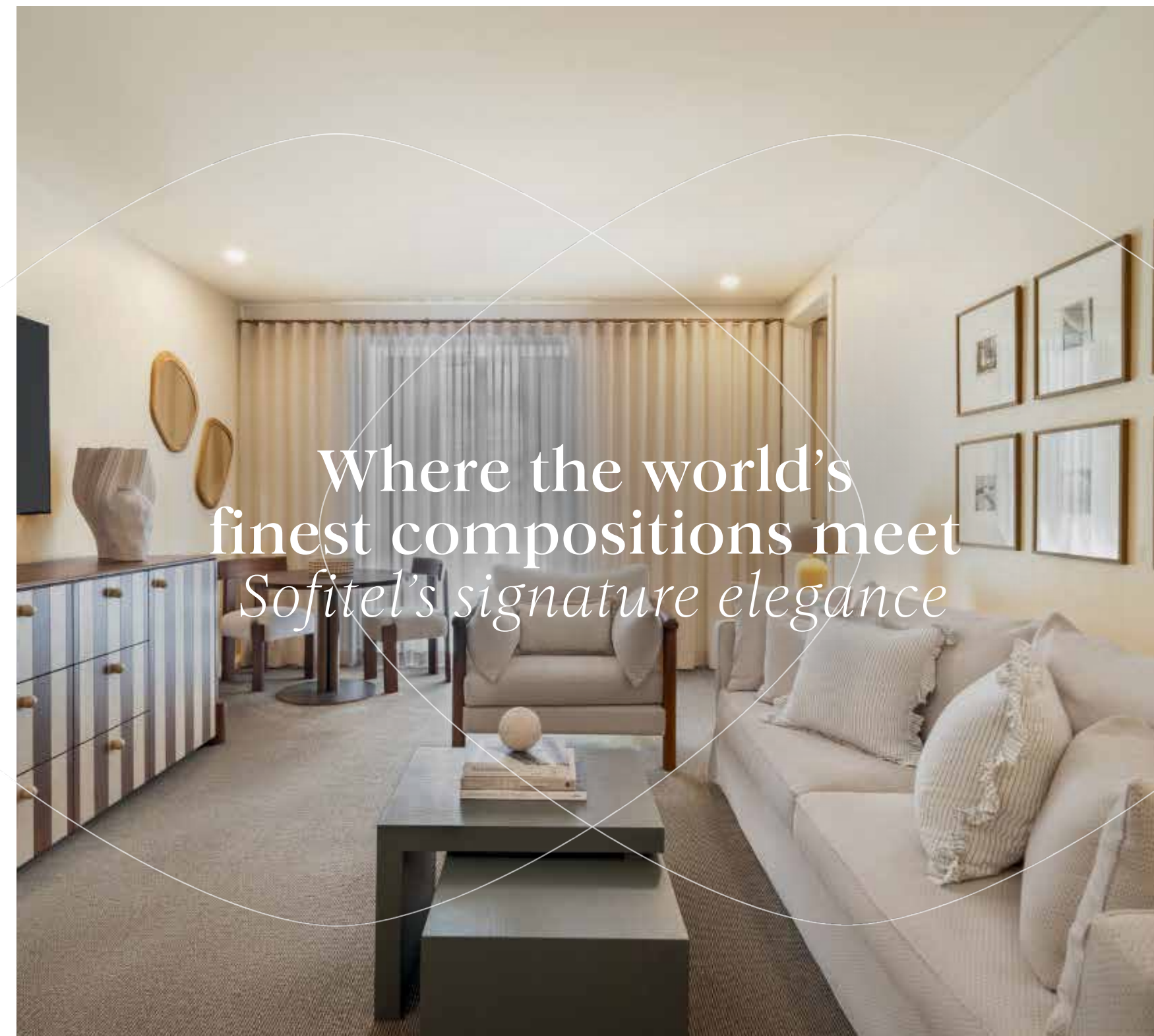
This publication is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out or otherwise circulated without the publisher's consent in writing. It is a further condition that this publication shall not be circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it was published.

Head Office: Suite A, Level 1, Building 16,
Disney Studios Australia, Park Road North, Moore Park NSW 2021
PO Box 410 Paddington NSW 2021
Telephone: +61 2 9921 5353 Fax: +61 2 9449 6053
Email: admin@playbill.com.au Website: www.playbill.com.au

Managing Director **Michael Nebenzahl**

Operating in Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, South Africa, Germany UK and in USA as Platypus Productions LLC

All enquiries for advertising space in this publication should be directed to the above company and address. Entire concept copyright Reproduction without permission in whole or in part of any material contained herein is prohibited. Title 'Playbill' is the registered title of Playbill Proprietary Limited. Title 'Showbill' is the registered title of Showbill Proprietary Limited. Additional copies of this publication are available by post from the publisher; please write for details. 19744 - 1/250903



All-Inclusive Retreat at Sofitel Sydney Wentworth *Indulge in the ultimate escape with the Grand Suite experience*

Enjoy Pommery Champagne & chocolates on arrival,
Club Millésime access,
Complimentary minibar,
Complimentary parking,
\$100 dining credit at tilda or Delta Rue,
Late checkout at 1 pm,
Balmain Paris Art of Sleep ritual gift to take home.

BOOK NOW AT [SOFITELSYDNEY.COM.AU](https://www.sofitelsydney.com.au) - TEL. +61(02) 9228 9188 - H3665@SOFITEL.COM

SOFITEL
SYDNEY WENTWORTH

MEMBER OF **All**



BROKENWOOD

HUNTER VALLEY



ENJOY GREAT WINE and have FUN



Award-winning
WINE EXPERIENCES
WINE BAR
RESTAURANT